



MILFORD HAVEN.

*N*e had embarked at Bristol in one of the fine large Irish steamers, uncertain whether we should tarry at Pembroke Dock or be satisfied with the glance at Milford Haven obtained by running up and down it on our way to Waterford, thence to explore the beauties of southern Ireland. The day was gloriously fine; and though on land quite equal in heat to the Bahamas, yet stationed on the bridge which spans the huge paddle boxes, and meeting the fresh westerly breeze blowing right in our faces from the Atlantic, we were in no need of shelter from the sun's rays. It was late in the afternoon when, hugging the shore to keep in the slack of the tide, we ran past Govan



Head, the chief promontory of the coast, midway between Tenby and the mouth of Milford Haven, where, if there be a sea running anywhere in the Bristol Channel, it achieves the nearest approach to "mountains high" of which that shameless exaggeration of phrase admits. If the wind blows anywhere it usually storms here.

"There lies the *Amelia*," said our skipper, pointing to an ugly black spot close in shore. "She went down there after striking that rock in a fog, so thick you couldn't see your bowsprit; and there she must lie, for they cannot raise her."

This *Amelia* was a Bristol steamer, lost last year. A lighthouse is needed here. There is none between Caldy Island and St. Anne's Head. If a brilliant light were lit in these heavy fogs it would suffice to warn ships of their immediate peril when close in shore, and enable them to correct their course. The coast from hence to Milford is full of dangers, apart even from the Stack and Crow rocks; and the Trinity House ought, least of all, to economise its luminous offices on this great western inlet to England.

The storms which rage and beat on the bluff face of the perpendicular cliffs which fringe this iron coast have worn and bored them into the most fantastic shapes and chasms conceivable. They form for miles the sea margin of the large estates of the Lord of Stackpole, Earl Cawdor. They revel in rocky hideousness, and startle you at each step with some ragged peak or cavernous gulf, more wild and monstrous than the rest. Swarms of puffins and elogus screech around you and complete the scene.

We steam on; and having passed close to that huge pile which looks like a gigantic pulpit for some clerical Triton, the Stack Rock, we shave Linney Head, and open the commanding cliff on which the St. Anne's lighthouses are built, and which forms the western horn of glorious Milford Haven. We rapidly approach the eastern cliff, and steam close round the fortress-capped rock called Thorn Island, which stands just far enough out from the mainland to allow a large ship to sail through the deep strait which severs them.

Few who witnessed the scenery of the Haven on that sunny evening will soon forget it. Sheltered by the beetling cliffs which tower aloft on either side, the placid waters of this grand estuary reposed in perfect calm. The sun was setting in its gorgeous bed of gold and crimson clouds. There was just ripple enough to break up the rose-tinted surface of the deep blue water into myriads of dazzling rubies. The Haven turns rapidly to the eastward, and the sun's setting rays shone on the broad expanse of ten miles of majestic lake, the coasts presenting grey and purple outlines of graceful undulation; and, save that there reigned around a strange stillness, a dearth of all shipping, and a most unnatural absence of the life and activity which so grand a haven seemsthus expressively to invite, nothing was wanted to the perfection of this singularly beautiful scene.

To return, however, to the fortifications.

The fort on Thorn Island is the main defence of the Haven. It mounts ten or twelve guns—to a

non-military eye—perched aloft in so naked a fashion that they might be all dismounted by the first volley fired from the heavy guns of a three-decker.

The mouth of the Haven, from St. Anne's Head to Thorn Island is just two miles wide. On the former, at Dale Point, a new fortification has been recently built, and a battery of a few guns for the first time confronts the twin headland, and is supposed thus to command the entrance of the Haven. That these two little forts would be insufficient, is manifest at a glance. Every part of the mouth is navigable by ships of the burden of the Great Eastern. The only rock rises to a single sharp point, over which several fathoms of water flow at the lowest tide, and it is well buoyed. Fogs frequently prevail, so that a large fleet might sail in without being seen from either shore. Two miles inwards there is another and a miniature battery, mounting three or four guns only, built on a low rock in the middle of the Haven, where about twice as many soldiers are garrisoned. A couple of frigates might with the greatest ease run up to Pater Dockyard, which lies on the east shore about eleven miles up, and set fire to the whole of it any dark night with impunity. The only ship in the whole of Milford Haven, or anywhere within two hundred miles of it, capable of making any resistance is the Eagle, 50 guns, a coast-guard ship anchored high up the harbour. This and the little Snake (gunboat) constitute the whole of the floating defences of this vast Haven and its noble dock-yards.

The "inheritance" of "this blessed Milford," as Imogen calls it, is more a reproach than a boon to us. We have done nothing whatever to give effect up to this hour to its boundless capacities for maritime commerce. Except, perhaps, Rio and San Francisco, there is no harbour equal to it in the world—certainly none approaching to it in the Old World; and yet there exists no means in any part of the Haven of docking an average-sized American liner, or of landing and warehousing its cargo! A small floating pier alone accommodates the Irish and Bristol steamers. Until these preliminaries to sea traffic are achieved, railways and inland means of transit are premature.

The little town of Milford stands about midway from the mouth to the dockyard, where the Haven ends. The water leaves about a furlong of the shore opposite to the town dry at each low spring tide, save a narrow stream which runs down one of the pills or inlets which abound on either side of the Haven. It is therefore not so well adapted in this respect for the planting of a second Liverpool as some other places on the shores; but, perhaps, taking all circumstances into account—especially the fact that it will be quickly connected by rail with the Johnston Station, on the South Wales line—it is the likeliest point at which to open the ball.

We speedily steamed up past the dockyards to a huge buoy, opposite to the Neyland terminus. We were rejoiced to see lights in the different sheds, showing extra activity in the dockyard, where no less than eight large ships are being rapidly built

or repaired for sea ; the fine old-fashioned ship, the Howe, 121 guns, being one of the latter.

We hired the first boat that came alongside to take us to the landing-ship at Neyland ; nor were we at all surprised to see a brawny woman with her great hat, forming, as we thought, the better half of the boat's crew, for no women in the world pull a better oar or dredge more manfully for oysters than the Amazons of Milford Haven. She had come, however, on no such errand ; and our

luggage and ourselves, three in number, being snugly stowed away, we gave the order to push off, when our female friend stood up and refused to let the boat proceed, until she had received a deaf and dumb child on board, who she persisted had arrived with us in the steamer. This was stoutly denied from on board, no such passenger had embarked ; none such was forthcoming. I now ordered the boatman to pull away, and he proceeded to obey ; but the tall woman, still standing



calmly, said, the boat should not stir. To our consternation the boatman, though pulling with all his might, could make no weigh whatever—the boat was immovable. The superstition of the people, as to the magical power of cunning women, is great ; and the man's courage was evidently giving way. He probably remembered a similarly strange fact which undoubtedly occurred within a few yards of the same spot when a great launch was once about to take place. A resolute Welsh woman (supposed to be what in the North would be termed "no canny") presented herself for admittance, as a spectator, in the best seats ; but was, as a matter of course, having no order, refused an entree. She coolly said, with a haughty sneer,

"Then there shall be no launch to-day." When the ship began to run down the slips, from some perfectly undiscoverable cause she came to a sudden and stubborn halt before she reached her new element. And sure enough there was no launch that day, nor for many a day afterwards. We were more fortunate ; we found means to transfer our evil genius to another boat. I, at the same time, unshipped our rudder, which had no doubt got foul of some hidden rope, and we sped merrily on our way across the ferry, to the infinite relief of our valiant Charon, and were soon under the roof of that prince of Welsh inns which flanks, with its pretty grounds, the Neyland Railway Station.

J. C. S.